

PROGRESS REPORT

Muskogee VA Medical Center
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Parking spots increase at MVAMC

In an effort to accommodate the growing number of veterans receiving their care at Muskogee VA Medical Center, a total of 81 parking spaces have been added at Muskogee in 2004. There are also plans to increase the number of handicapped parking spaces.

Realizing that even more parking is needed, especially on peak days such as Mondays, the medical center is working with other businesses and organizations to see if there is parking available for veterans who can



then be shuttled to and from the facility.

Tulsa Outpatient Clinic's (TOPC) parking will increase with the expansion of service at two locations. In the near future, the Behavioral Medicine program at TOPC will be relocating to a newly leased space not far from the clinic. Negotiations are under way to complete the lease of 9,000 square feet to accommodate the expanding mental health program. Activation of the clinic will begin after the lease signing.

Veteran wins gold at Golden Age Games

Adrian "Bud" Gould, an Army Air Corps veteran from Muskogee was one of nearly 500 veterans who competed in the 18th National Veterans Golden Age Games in Fresno, Calif., from July 18-23.

Competing in four events, Gould medaled in two, including a gold in dominoes and a silver medal in 9-ball. His other two events were golf and horseshoes.

"The National Veterans Golden Age Games give me a chance to compete with others and enjoy fellowship with veterans in my age

group," said Gould. "I also want to show people that you are only as old as you feel!"

Other Oklahoma veterans competing were Carl May, 82, a combat veteran of World War II and Ron Moses, 60 a combat veteran and former prisoner of war in Vietnam.

May, who has competed in the games for the last three years, said that the games give him something to look forward to.

"I enjoy meeting a lot of comrades

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Golden Age Games

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and I like the challenge of competition,” said May.

Moses agrees. “Participating in this event lets me know that I am still an important person and lets my family know that I plan to be around for a long time to help other people.”

May competed in shuffleboard, checkers, croquet and dominoes, while Moses competed in golf, billiards 9-ball, horseshoes and pentathlon.



Bud Gould won a silver medal competing in billiards.

Any veteran over the age of 55 and receives their care at a VA is eligible to compete. And next

year the games will be held in Oklahoma City May 21-26 at the University of Oklahoma at Norman.

May said that interested veterans should try to make it to Norman next year to see what it's like.

If you would like more information about the National Veterans Golden Age Games, contact Voluntary Service at (918) 680-3621 or 3622. Visit the web at <http://www1.va.gov/vetevent/ga/2004/default.cfm> to view more pictures and learn about next year's event.

Secretary's decision on CARES

The Secretary's decision on CARES (Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services) brings positive changes for Oklahoma veterans. Among those are five new community clinics and a study to determine veterans' needs in Tulsa and Muskogee.

“These changes will provide greater access to care for veterans,” said VA Secretary Anthony J. Principi. “By strengthening our network of outpatient clinics, we will bring a greater quality of care closer to where most of Oklahoma's veterans live.”

About 72,000 of Oklahoma's 365,000 veterans were treated last year in VA's health care facilities, up from 60,000 in

2000. In 2003, VA spent \$1.2 billion in Oklahoma, an increase from \$843 million three years before. Muskogee VAMC's outpatient visits increased from 246,697 in fiscal year (FY) 2002 to 264,805 in FY03 – an additional 18,108 visits.

CARES is a plan to modernize and improve VA's health care system.

Principi's announcement includes the following enhancements for health care affecting veterans in Oklahoma:

- Open five new outpatient clinics in Vinita, Jay, Enid, Altus and Stillwater;

- Study how best to meet the need of veterans in the Tulsa and Muskogee area, including the potential for expansion of inpatient psychiatry at Muskogee; and
- Retain ambulatory surgery and observation beds at Muskogee.

Among the elements of the Secretary's CARES decision are more than 150 new community based outpatient clinics, potential creation of four new - and expansion of five existing - spinal cord injury centers, two new blind rehabilitation centers, and expansions throughout VA's health care system that will enhance veterans' access to VA care.

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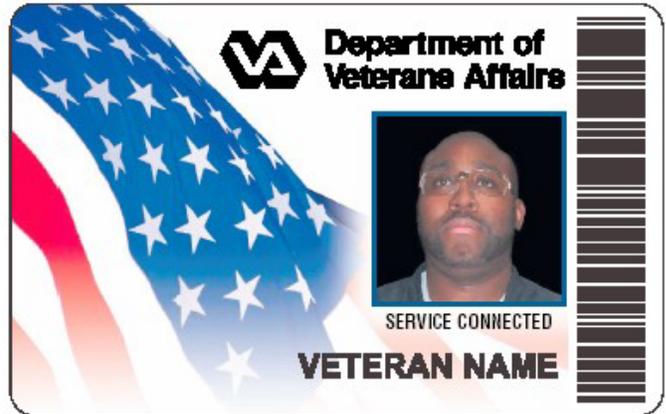
New veteran identification cards are here

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has developed a new process for creating and distributing Veteran Identification Cards (VIC) to veterans eligible to use VHA medical facilities.

Both Muskogee and Tulsa outpatient clinic locations of the VA Medical Center have the equipment to take veterans' pictures and process the new ID cards.

A centralized production facility will produce the card and it will be mailed to the veteran's address within 5-7 business days.

The face of the cards include a 1" X 1" color photo of the veteran and a barcode. No other personal information will be visible on the card.



The barcode contains the veteran's social security number and the back of the card contains a magnetic stripe with key information to access the patient's record and includes printed information for questions on health care.

Veterans may continue to use their existing VIC until the new card arrives.

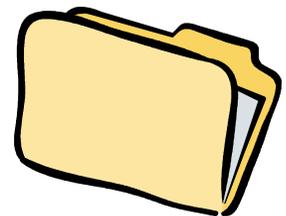
Wrong information sent about military records

Erroneous messages circulating on the Internet are telling veterans that the National Archives and Records Administration's (NARA) National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis plans to digitally scan its military personnel records and destroy the paper files unless veterans request that the originals be sent to them.

NARA officials say this is false and that the Personnel Records Center does not intend to destroy its paper files. Any scanning will be to reduce the need for handling fragile records during the reference process.

Officials stressed that it is the center's responsibility to preserve and protect official military

personnel files, as they are permanently valuable records



documenting the essential evidence of military service for the nation's veterans.

CARES decision

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"CARES modernizes VA's 74-year-old health care system," said Principi. "I want to emphasize that no veteran will lose health care as a result of CARES, nor will there be any gaps in their health care services."

The CARES plan was reviewed by an independent commission, which received more than 212,000 comments and held 81 site visits to VA and Department of Defense medical facilities, and State Veterans Homes, 38 public hearings and 10 formal meetings. Muskogee VAMC held one of those 38 public hearings on Aug. 22, 03.

The commission submitted its recommendations to Secretary Principi in mid-February.

For more information, the Secretary's CARES report can be viewed in its entirety on VA's Web site at <http://www.va.gov/CARES>.

Flu clinics begin

Starting Oct. 12, free flu shots will be available at Muskogee VA Medical Center including its outpatient clinics in Tulsa and McAlester.

The vaccine is recommended for veterans over 50 years old, with chronic diseases of the heart, lungs, kidneys, diabetes, weak immune systems, or severe forms of anemia.

Typical flu illness includes fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, as well as headache, muscle aches, and often feeling very weak.

If you get your flu shot somewhere other than VA, please let your Primary Care team know when and where on your next visit.



Volunteers honored at banquet

Muskogee VA Medical Center paid tribute to its 500-plus volunteers at its annual Volunteer Banquet held at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 474 in 2004. Volunteers donated over 74,000 hours of service to veterans in 2003, 13,000 more hours than the previous year. Approximately 135 volunteers attended the “Hawaiian” -themed awards ceremony and luncheon.

Among the service awards were Ernest Parish with 8,750 hours, John Millsap with 15,000 hours and Ray Merrick with 35,000 of hours donated.

Volunteer of the Year was Pat

Hayes, who volunteers three days a week in the medical center’s outpatient surgery area.



Pat Hayes

Nominees for Volunteer of the Year were: Buford Brown, Doris Carnell, Ruth Faulkner, Bill Giles, Pat Hayes, Harry Howarth, Luella Howarth, Norman James, Dorothy King, Ray Merrick, John Millsap, Ernest Parish, William Powell, Slim Wardell and Frank Wyatt.

If you are interested in volunteering, contact Greg Sorenson, Voluntary Service Chief, at (918) 680-3621.

Don’t be a “no show”

Muskogee VAMC wants you to know how important it is to keep your scheduled appointment.

First of all, clinic appointments are considered important to your health and wellness. Secondly, due to the increase in enrolled veterans, the demand for health care services limits the number of available appointments.

So help us help YOU! If you cannot keep your scheduled appointment, call your team or clinic at least 24 hours in advance to cancel. That will give us an opportunity to treat more veterans.

Insurance collections mean more vets treated

Money collected from insurance enables Muskogee VAMC to provide more services to YOU and other veterans. In 2004, Muskogee VAMC was able to treat 2,600 additional veterans, making a total of 29,607 veterans treated for the year! Please continue to let us know if there are any changes or additions to your insurance.

Your comments or questions are welcome. Contact Nita McClellan at (918) 680-3704, toll free at 1-888-397-8387, ext. 3704., or benita.mcclellan@med.va.gov